

REMARKS

Claims 1-5, 7-29, and 31-60 are pending in the Application. Claims 1-5, 7, 9, 19, 21-29, 31, 33-43, 45-51, 53, 55, and 56 currently stand rejected. Claims 8, 20, 32, 44, 52, 54, and 57-60 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, claims 2, 8, 9, 20, 26, 32, 33, 44, and 52-60 are amended, and claims 1, 7, 25, 31, and 49-51 are canceled herein. Reconsideration of the Application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Specification

In paragraph 2 of the Office Action, the Examiner objects to the specification because of "improper incorporations by reference to 3 non-patent documents on pages 8, 10, and 13." The Examiner further states that "[t]hey are over 10 years old . . . and, as such, are admitted prior art." With regard to these foregoing objections to the Specification, the Applicants respectfully submit that, under Rule 111(b), "a request may be made that objections or requirements as to form not necessary to further consideration of the claims be held in abeyance until allowable subject matter is indicated." However, in the present Response, Applicants herein amend the Specification to delete the foregoing cited incorporations by reference.

Cancellation Of Rejected Claims

In the Office Action of December 17, 2003, the Examiner has indicated that claims 1-5, 7, 9,-19, 21-29, 31, 33-43, 45-51, 53, 55, and 56 remain rejected. Because of the Applicants' wish to expedite the allowance and issuance of the present Application, Applicants therefore refrain from further discussing the cited references, and instead, herein cancel currently rejected claims 1, 7, 25, 31, and 49-51 without prejudice, and amend the remaining rejected claims to depended from allowable claims to thereby place the Application in condition for immediate allowance.

The Applicants expressly state that the rejected claims are not cancelled or amended herein for reasons of patentability. The rejected claims are cancelled or amended solely to expedite the allowance and issuance of the Application. Furthermore, the Applicants also reserve the right to seek allowance of any additional claims in Applications that may claim priority in the present Application.

Allowable Subject Matter

In paragraph 12, the Examiner indicates that claims 8, 20, 32, 44, 52, 54, and 57-60 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The Examiner further indicates specific allowable subject matter from claims 8, 20, 32, 44, 52, and 54. Applicants therefore herein amend claims 8, 20, 32, 44, 52, and 54 in

independent form to include the foregoing indicated allowable subject matter, along with the limitations of the corresponding base claim and any intervening claims, to thereby place claims 8, 20, 32, 44, 52, and 54 in condition for immediate allowance.

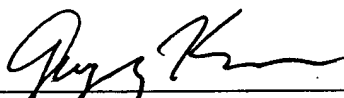
Applicants also herein amend claims 57-60 in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, to thereby place claims 57-60 in condition for immediate allowance. The remaining non-cancelled dependent claims depend from respective corresponding ones of the foregoing independent claims 8, 20, 32, 44, 52, 54, and 57-60, and are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons.

Summary

Applicants submit that the foregoing amendments and remarks overcome the Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). Because the cited references, or the Examiner's citations thereto, do not teach or suggest the claimed invention, and in light of the differences between the claimed invention and the cited prior art, Applicants therefore submit that the claimed invention is patentable over the cited art, and respectfully request the Examiner to allow claims 2-5, 8-24, 26-29, 32-48, and 52-60, so that the present Application may issue in a timely manner. If there are any questions concerning this amendment, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,

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